

S. 271, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to enhance the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit and make the credit fully refundable.

S. 278

At the request of Mr. WARNOCK, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. SMITH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 278, a bill to require the Secretary of Agriculture to provide assistance for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and socially disadvantaged groups, and for other purposes.

S. 307

At the request of Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, the names of the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN), the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL), the Senator from Nevada (Ms. ROSEN) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) were added as cosponsors of S. 307, a bill to amend the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 to authorize the Secretary of Commerce to make grants for travel promotion, and for other purposes.

S. 333

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 333, a bill to amend title XI and title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide funding for State strike teams, technical assistance, and infection control for resident and worker safety in skilled nursing facilities and nursing facilities, and for other purposes.

S. 374

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. SMITH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 374, a bill to amend the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 to require the submission by issuers of data relating to diversity, and for other purposes.

S. 377

At the request of Mr. SULLIVAN, the names of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN), the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS), the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL) and the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES) were added as cosponsors of S. 437, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to concede exposure to airborne hazards and toxins from burn pits under certain circumstances, and for other purposes.

S. 441

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BRAUN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 441, a bill to require the Consumer Product Safety Commission to promulgate a consumer product safety rule for free-standing clothing storage units to protect children from tip-over related death or injury, and for other purposes.

S. 456

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the names of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ), the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES) and the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) were added as cosponsors of S. 456, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend the new markets tax credit, and for other purposes.

S. 460

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 460, a bill to extend the authority for Federal contractors to reimburse employees unable to perform work due to the COVID-19 pandemic from March 31, 2021, to September 30, 2021.

S. 488

At the request of Mr. HAGERTY, the names of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. TUBERVILLE) were added as cosponsors of S. 488, a bill to provide for congressional review of actions to terminate or waive sanctions imposed with respect to Iran.

S. 519

At the request of Mr. HAGERTY, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 519, a bill to review the use of election security grants in the 2020 presidential election and to prohibit future election security grants to States with unconstitutional election procedures.

S. 522

At the request of Mr. LANKFORD, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 522, a bill to require each agency, in providing notice of a rule making, to include a link to a 100 word plain language summary of the proposed rule.

S. 530

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 530, a bill to amend the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 to require shareholder authorization before a public company may make certain political expenditures, and for other purposes.

S. 535

At the request of Ms. ERNST, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 535, a bill to authorize the location of a memorial on the National Mall to commemorate and honor the members of the Armed Forces that served on active duty in support of the Global War on Terrorism, and for other purposes.

S. 560

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the names of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) were added as cosponsors of S. 560, a bill to improve coverage of maternal oral health care, and for other purposes.

S. 583

At the request of Mr. PETERS, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 583, a bill to promote innovative acquisition techniques and procurement strategies, and for other purposes.

S. 586

At the request of Mrs. CAPITO, the names of the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) were added as cosponsors of S. 586, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to combat the opioid crisis by promoting access to non-opioid treatments in the hospital outpatient setting.

S. 591

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 591, a bill to prohibit firearms dealers from selling a firearm prior to the completion of a background check.

S. RES. 13

At the request of Mr. SCOTT of Florida, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 13, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that the International Olympic Committee should rebid the 2022 Winter Olympic Games to be hosted by a country that recognizes and respects human rights.

S. RES. 96

At the request of Ms. ROSEN, the names of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN), the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 96, a resolution designating March 8 through March 14, 2021, as "Women of the Aviation Workforce Week".

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTION

By Mr. THUNE (for himself, Mr. BARRASSO, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. COTTON, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. DAINES, Ms. ERNST, Mrs. FISCHER, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. MORAN, Mr. RISCH, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, Mr. SHELBY, and Mr. WICKER):

S. 617. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the estate and generation-skipping transfer taxes, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 617

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Death Tax Repeal Act of 2021”.

SEC. 2. REPEAL OF ESTATE AND GENERATION-SKIPPING TRANSFER TAXES.

(a) ESTATE TAX REPEAL.—Subchapter C of chapter 11 of subtitle B of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“SEC. 2210. TERMINATION.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subsection (b), this chapter shall not apply to the estates of decedents dying on or after the date of the enactment of the Death Tax Repeal Act of 2021.

“(b) CERTAIN DISTRIBUTIONS FROM QUALIFIED DOMESTIC TRUSTS.—In applying section 2056A with respect to the surviving spouse of a decedent dying before the date of the enactment of the Death Tax Repeal Act of 2021—

“(1) section 2056A(b)(1)(A) shall not apply to distributions made after the 10-year period beginning on such date, and

“(2) section 2056A(b)(1)(B) shall not apply on or after such date.”.

(b) GENERATION-SKIPPING TRANSFER TAX REPEAL.—Subchapter G of chapter 13 of subtitle B of such Code is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“SEC. 2664. TERMINATION.

“This chapter shall not apply to generation-skipping transfers on or after the date of the enactment of the Death Tax Repeal Act of 2021.”.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(1) The table of sections for subchapter C of chapter 11 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“Sec. 2210. Termination.”.

(2) The table of sections for subchapter G of chapter 13 of such Code is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“Sec. 2664. Termination.”.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply to the estates of decedents dying, and generation-skipping transfers, after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 3. MODIFICATIONS OF GIFT TAX.

(a) COMPUTATION OF GIFT TAX.—Subsection (a) of section 2502 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended to read as follows:

“(a) COMPUTATION OF TAX.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The tax imposed by section 2501 for each calendar year shall be an amount equal to the excess of—

“(A) a tentative tax, computed under paragraph (2), on the aggregate sum of the taxable gifts for such calendar year and for each of the preceding calendar periods, over

“(B) a tentative tax, computed under paragraph (2), on the aggregate sum of the taxable gifts for each of the preceding calendar periods.

“(2) RATE SCHEDULE.—

“If the amount with respect to which the tentative tax to be computed is:

	The tentative tax is:
Not over \$10,000	18% of such amount.
Over \$10,000 but not over \$20,000	\$1,800, plus 20% of the excess over \$10,000.
Over \$20,000 but not over \$40,000	\$3,800, plus 22% of the excess over \$20,000.
Over \$40,000 but not over \$60,000	\$8,200, plus 24% of the excess over \$40,000.
Over \$60,000 but not over \$80,000	\$13,000, plus 26% of the excess over \$60,000.
Over \$80,000 but not over \$100,000	\$18,200, plus 28% of the excess over \$80,000.
Over \$100,000 but not over \$150,000	\$23,800, plus 30% of the excess over \$100,000.
Over \$150,000 but not over \$250,000	\$38,800, plus 32% of the excess over \$150,000.
Over \$250,000 but not over \$500,000	\$70,800, plus 34% of the excess over \$250,000.
Over \$500,000	\$155,800, plus 35% of the excess over \$500,000.”.

(b) TREATMENT OF CERTAIN TRANSFERS IN TRUST.—Section 2511 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(c) TREATMENT OF CERTAIN TRANSFERS IN TRUST.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this section and except as provided in regulations, a transfer in trust shall be treated as a taxable gift under section 2503, unless the trust is treated as wholly owned by the donor or the donor’s spouse under subpart E of part I of subchapter J of chapter 1.”.

(c) LIFETIME GIFT EXEMPTION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (1) of section 2505(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended to read as follows:

“(1) the amount of the tentative tax which would be determined under the rate schedule set forth in section 2502(a)(2) if the amount with respect to which such tentative tax is to be computed were \$10,000,000, reduced by”.

(2) INFLATION ADJUSTMENT.—Section 2505 of such Code is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(d) INFLATION ADJUSTMENT.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—In the case of any calendar year after 2011, the dollar amount in subsection (a)(1) shall be increased by an amount equal to—

“(A) such dollar amount, multiplied by

“(B) the cost-of-living adjustment determined under section 1(f)(3) for such calendar year by substituting ‘calendar year 2010’ for ‘calendar year 2016’ in subparagraph (A)(ii) thereof.

“(2) ROUNDING.—If any amount as adjusted under paragraph (1) is not a multiple of \$10,000, such amount shall be rounded to the nearest multiple of \$10,000.”.

(d) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(1) Section 2505(a) of such Code is amended by striking the last sentence.

(2) The heading for section 2505 of such Code is amended by striking “UNIFIED”.

(3) The item in the table of sections for subchapter A of chapter 12 of such Code re-

lating to section 2505 is amended to read as follows:

“Sec. 2505. Credit against gift tax.”.

(e) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply to gifts made on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(f) TRANSITION RULE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of applying sections 1015(d), 2502, and 2505 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, the calendar year in which this Act is enacted shall be treated as 2 separate calendar years one of which ends on the day before the date of the enactment of this Act and the other of which begins on such date of enactment.

(2) APPLICATION OF SECTION 2504(b).—For purposes of applying section 2504(b) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, the calendar year in which this Act is enacted shall be treated as one preceding calendar period.

By Ms. HIRONO (for herself, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. COONS, and Mr. LEAHY):

S. 632. A bill to amend chapter 11 of title 35, United States Code, to require the voluntary collection of demographic information for patent inventors, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the Inventor Diversity for Economic Advancement Act of 2021. I thank my colleague from North Carolina, Senator TILLIS, for working with me on this important piece of legislation, which serves as a first step to closing the diversity gap in our patent system by collecting demographic data on patent applicants.

Women and racial minorities have made some of the most significant inventions in this Nation’s history. The \$75 billion home security industry grew

from an initial home security system invented by Marie Van Brittan Brown. The computer would never have become the multimedia device it is today without the microcomputer system invented by Mark Dean. The genetic revolution would still be science fiction if not for the CRISPR gene-editing tool discovered by Jennifer Doudna—raised on Hawaii’s Big Island.

We should celebrate these inventors and the many others like them who have contributed to innovation in this Nation. But we must also recognize the hard truth that women, racial minorities, and many other groups are greatly underrepresented in the U.S. patent system.

The Patent and Trademark Office’s recent report on women inventors shines a spotlight on one part of this problem. The PTO found that only 22 percent of U.S. patents list a woman as an inventor and that women make up only 13 percent of all inventors. This is true even though women held 43 percent of all full-time jobs in 2016 and 28 percent of STEM jobs in 2015.

Other reports highlight racial patent gaps. For example, a report by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research found that the percentage of African American and Hispanic college graduates who hold patents is approximately half that of their white counterparts.

Closing these gaps would turbocharge our economy. According to a study by Michigan State University Professor Lisa Cook, including more women and African Americans in the “initial stage of the process of innovation” could increase GDP by as much as \$640 billion.

Another study by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that eliminating the patent gap for women with science and engineering degrees alone would increase GDP by over \$500 billion.

It's simply good policy and good business to want to fully integrate people of all types into our innovation economy. But if we have any hope of closing the various patent gaps, we must first get a firm grasp on the scope of the problem.

Studies of the demographic makeup of patentees, like the ones I described, are few and far between. The reason is a simple one. A lack of data. The PTO does not collect any data on applicants beyond their first and last names and city, State, and country of residence. As a result, those wishing to study patent gaps between different demographic groups are forced to guess the gender of an applicant based on his or her name, determine the race of an applicant by cross-referencing census data, or explore a number of other options that are time-consuming, unreliable, or both.

The IDEA Act solves this problem. It would require the PTO to collect demographic data—including gender, race, and military or veteran status—from patent applicants on a voluntary basis. It would further require the PTO to issue reports on the data collected and, perhaps more importantly, make the data available to the public with appropriate protections for personally identifiable information. Outside researchers could therefore conduct their own analyses and offer insights into the various patent gaps in our society.

Let me be clear. Closing the information gap facing researchers alone will not solve the patent gap facing women, racial minorities, and so many others. But it is a critical first step. I therefore encourage my colleagues to support the IDEA Act.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself and Mr. LANKFORD):

S. 644. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to restore State authority to waive for certain facilities the 35-mile rule for designating critical access hospitals under the Medicare program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 644

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Rural Hospital Closure Relief Act of 2021”.

SEC. 2. RESTORING STATE AUTHORITY TO WAIVE THE 35-MILE RULE FOR CERTAIN MEDICARE CRITICAL ACCESS HOSPITAL DESIGNATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1820 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395i-4) is amended—

(1) in subsection (c)(2)—

(A) in subparagraph (B)(i)—

(i) in subclause (I), by striking at the end “or”;

(ii) in subclause (II), by inserting at the end “or”;

(iii) by adding at the end the following new subclause:

“(III) subject to subparagraph (G), is a hospital described in subparagraph (F) and is certified on or after the date of the enactment of the Rural Hospital Closure Relief Act of 2021 by the State as being a necessary provider of health care services to residents in the area;”;

(B) by adding at the end the following new subparagraphs:

“(F) HOSPITAL DESCRIBED.—For purposes of subparagraph (B)(i)(III), a hospital described in this subparagraph is a hospital that—

“(i) is a sole community hospital (as defined in section 1886(d)(5)(D)(iii)), a medicare dependent, small rural hospital (as defined in section 1886(d)(5)(G)(iv)), a low-volume hospital that in 2021 receives a payment adjustment under section 1886(d)(12), a subsection (d) hospital (as defined in section 1886(d)(1)(B)) that has fewer than 50 beds, or, subject to the limitation under subparagraph (G)(i)(I), is a facility described in subparagraph (G)(ii);

“(ii) is located in a rural area, as defined in section 1886(d)(2)(D);

“(iii)(I) is located—

“(aa) in a county that has a percentage of individuals with income that is below 150 percent of the poverty line that is higher than the national or statewide average in 2020;

“(bb) in a health professional shortage area (as defined in section 332(a)(1)(A) of the Public Health Service Act); or

“(II) has a percentage of inpatient days of individuals entitled to benefits under part A of this title, enrolled under part B of this title, or enrolled under a State plan under title XIX that is higher than the national or statewide average in 2019 or 2020;

“(iv) subject to subparagraph (G)(ii)(II), has attested to the Secretary two consecutive years of negative operating margins preceding the date of certification described in subparagraph (B)(i)(III); and

“(v) submits to the Secretary—

“(I) at such time and in such manner as the Secretary may require, an attestation outlining the good governance qualifications and strategic plan for multi-year financial solvency of the hospital; and

“(II) not later than 120 days after the date on which the Secretary issues final regulations pursuant to section 2(b) of the Rural Hospital Closure Relief Act of 2021, an application for certification of the facility as a critical access hospital.

“(G) LIMITATION ON CERTAIN DESIGNATIONS.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may not under subsection (e) certify pursuant to a certification by a State under subparagraph (B)(i)(III)—

“(I) more than a total of 175 facilities as critical access hospitals, of which not more than 20 percent may be facilities described in clause (ii); and

“(II) within any one State, more than 10 facilities as critical access hospitals.

“(ii) FACILITY DESCRIBED.—

“(I) IN GENERAL.—A facility described in this clause is a facility that as of the date of enactment of this subparagraph met the criteria for designation as a critical access hospital under subparagraph (B)(i)(I).

“(II) NONAPPLICATION OF CERTAIN CRITERIA.—For purposes of subparagraph (B)(i)(III), the criteria described in subparagraph (F)(iv) shall not apply with respect to

the designation of a facility described in subclause (I).”; and

(2) in subsection (e), by inserting “, subject to subsection (c)(2)(G),” after “The Secretary shall”.

(b) REGULATIONS.—Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall issue final regulations to carry out this section.

(c) CLARIFICATION REGARDING FACILITIES THAT MEET DISTANCE OR OTHER CERTIFICATION CRITERIA.—Nothing in this section shall affect the application of criteria for designation as a critical access hospital described in subclause (I) or (II) section 1820(c)(2)(B)(i) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395i-4(c)(2)(B)(i)).

SEC. 3. CMI TESTING OF NEW RURAL HOSPITAL DELIVERY AND PAYMENT MODEL.

Section 1115A of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1315a) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b)(2)(A), by adding at the end the following new sentence: “The models selected under this subparagraph shall include the testing of a new rural hospital delivery and payment model (or models), as described in subsection (h).”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(h) TESTING OF NEW RURAL HOSPITAL DELIVERY AND PAYMENT MODEL.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—

“(A) TESTING.—The Secretary shall test the implementation of a new rural hospital delivery and payment model (or models) that the Secretary determines would promote financially sustainable ways to ensure patient access to care in rural communities, which may include models under which such hospitals furnish outpatient emergency care services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for which payment is made under title XVIII based on the amount determined under the prospective payment system for hospital outpatient department services under section 1833(t), plus a fixed rate for the cost of furnishing the emergency services.

“(B) PROMULGATION OF REGULATIONS.—Not later than 3 years after the date of the enactment of this subsection, the Secretary shall promulgate regulations to test a new rural hospital delivery and payment model (or models) described in subparagraph (A), unless Congress enacts legislation that establishes such a payment model (or models) prior to the promulgation of regulations pursuant to this subparagraph.

“(2) TRANSITION.—Effective beginning on the date on which the testing of a new rural hospital delivery and payment model (or models) described in paragraph (1)(A) is implemented under this subsection or such a payment model (or models) is established through the enactment of legislation described in paragraph (1)(B), the Secretary shall provide a process under which—

“(A) all critical access hospitals may transition to such new model or models under this subsection; and

“(B) any facility that was designated as a critical access hospital pursuant to a certification by a State under section 1820(c)(2)(B)(i)(III) may revert to the prospective payment model (or models) under which the facility received payment under title XVIII prior to being so designated.”.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 97—CALLING ON THE GOVERNMENT OF ETHIOPIA, THE TIGRAY PEOPLE'S LIBERATION FRONT, AND OTHER BELLIGERENTS TO CEASE ALL HOSTILITIES, PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS, ALLOW UNFETTERED HUMANITARIAN ACCESS, AND COOPERATE WITH INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS OF CREDIBLE ATROCITY ALLEGATIONS PERTAINING TO THE CONFLICT IN THE TIGRAY REGION OF ETHIOPIA

Mr. RISCH (for himself, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. COONS, Mr. KAINE, Mr. YOUNG, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 97

Whereas the United States and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia share an important relationship and more than a century of diplomatic relations;

Whereas Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa and plays a key role in advancing security and stability across sub-Saharan Africa, including as a top contributor of uniformed personnel to United Nations peacekeeping missions;

Whereas tensions between Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's Prosperity Party and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which was part of the ruling coalition in Ethiopia until late 2019, escalated when the TPLF held elections in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia on September 9, 2020, despite the decision by the Federal Government of Ethiopia to postpone general elections due to the COVID-19 pandemic;

Whereas the TPLF rejected the postponement of general elections and considered the extension of the term of the Federal Government to be unconstitutional, and the Federal Government subsequently deemed the Tigray regional elections illegitimate;

Whereas, in the early hours of November 4, 2020, Prime Minister Abiy ordered a military offensive in response to an attack by the TPLF on the Northern Command of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), which evolved into an armed conflict between the ENDF and allied forces on one side and the TPLF on the other side, with thousands of deaths reported;

Whereas the Government of Ethiopia rejected all offers, including one extended by African Union Chairman Cyril Ramaphosa in November 2020, to mediate talks with the TPLF;

Whereas, on November 28, 2020, the Government of Ethiopia claimed victory in the conflict after taking Mekelle, the capital city of the Tigray Region, with Prime Minister Abiy announcing that his forces had "completed and ceased the military operations" and would shift focus to rebuilding the region and providing humanitarian assistance while Federal police attempt to apprehend leaders of the TPLF;

Whereas clashes have continued in the Tigray Region and Ethiopian soldiers and allied forces have pursued prominent TPLF leaders, notably killing former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia Seyoum Mesfin as part of a "stabilizing mission . . . to bring to justice perpetrators";

Whereas, in 2020, prior to the outbreak of fighting in the Tigray Region, there were more than 1,800,000 people internally dis-

placed in Ethiopia and approximately 2,000,000 people in the Tigray Region were already in need of humanitarian assistance;

Whereas the conflict in the Tigray Region has prompted more than 61,000 Ethiopians to seek refuge in Sudan, has displaced as many as 500,000 people internally, and has caused severe shortages of food, water, medical supplies, and other necessary goods for those who remain in the region;

Whereas the conflict has disrupted harvests, livelihoods, markets, and supply chains, food and medical supplies have been looted, and restrictions and bureaucratic impediments continue to constrain the humanitarian response, with nearly 4,000,000 people in the Tigray Region estimated to require urgent food assistance, including 100,000 Eritrean refugees;

Whereas, during the first few weeks of the conflict, there was a complete shutdown of electricity, banking, internet, and telephone services throughout the Tigray Region by the Government of Ethiopia, with government reports of TPLF forces also destroying communications infrastructure, and subsequent service restorations have been limited;

Whereas, in addition to the shutdown of telephone and internet services, which has severely limited the flow of information on the conflict and the humanitarian situation, journalists have been restricted from accessing much of the Tigray Region, several journalists have been arrested in connection to their coverage of the conflict, and one journalist working for the Tigray Mass Media Agency was killed;

Whereas, although the Government of Ethiopia entered into an agreement with the United Nations on November 29, 2020, to facilitate humanitarian access to the Tigray Region, that access remains limited;

Whereas, on February 1, 2021, the Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council stated, "Twelve weeks since the fighting began, the basic elements of a response on the scale needed are still not in place. It is false to say that aid is increasingly getting through. Aid has only gone to the places with little conflict and more limited needs and is not keeping pace with the humanitarian crisis as it inevitably grows over time.";

Whereas, on February 6, 2021, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) announced a new agreement with the Government of Ethiopia to rapidly scale up the deployment of emergency food assistance while improving the process for reviewing and approving requests from United Nations and humanitarian partner agencies;

Whereas humanitarian access to the refugee camps that were home to almost 100,000 Eritrean refugees at the start of the conflict has been especially restricted, with the Hitsats and Shimelba camps still completely inaccessible, and the United Nations Refugee Agency estimates that 20,000 Eritrean refugees displaced from those camps remain unaccounted for;

Whereas United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi has expressed alarm about the "overwhelming number of disturbing reports of Eritrean refugees in Tigray being killed, abducted and forcibly returned to Eritrea";

Whereas, in November 2020, four humanitarian workers, including one employee of the International Rescue Committee and three employees of the Danish Refugee Council, were killed at Hitsats refugee camp;

Whereas challenges to access have significantly restricted the reporting and documentation of atrocities, but survivor and eye-witness testimony and satellite imagery have enabled reports to emerge of targeted violence or indiscriminate attacks against

civilians committed by multiple parties to the conflict;

Whereas examples of reported atrocities committed in the Tigray Region include the massacre in the town of Mai Kadra on November 9, 2020, in which, according to estimates from the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), more than 600 civilians died from what the EHRC Chief Commissioner concluded was "for no reason other than their ethnicity," and a mass killing in the city of Axum on November 28 through 29, 2020, which involved, according to reports from Amnesty International, the systematic killing of "hundreds of unarmed civilians" after Ethiopian and Eritrean troops retook the city;

Whereas United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten has highlighted reports of sexual and gender-based violence, including a high number of alleged rapes in Mekelle;

Whereas, on January 27, 2021, the United States Government publicly confirmed that Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF) are participating in the conflict in alliance with the ENDF and called for the immediate withdrawal of all EDF soldiers from the Tigray Region, and credible reports have emerged that EDF soldiers participating in the conflict have attacked civilians, including Eritrean refugees, and looted and destroyed homes and religious institutions;

Whereas Ethiopia has been beset in recent years by multiple human rights and humanitarian challenges, including targeted ethnic violence, intercommunal conflict, natural disasters, and political unrest;

Whereas, since mid-2020, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Amnesty International, and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission have reported atrocities and a rise in ethnic and intercommunal violence in other parts of Ethiopia, including in the Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Somali, Afar, and Oromia regions;

Whereas, according to international human rights organizations, during the conflict in the Tigray Region, ethnic Tigrayans throughout Ethiopia have been suspended from their jobs and prevented from leaving the country, and there are reports of surveillance and mass arrests of citizens of Ethiopia based on their ethnicity;

Whereas Ethiopia is undergoing a fragile democratic transition, with the postponed 2020 general elections rescheduled for June 2021, except in the Tigray Region, where elections have not yet been scheduled;

Whereas the Government of Ethiopia has restricted the right of several opposition political parties to peacefully assemble, and a number of opposition leaders have been jailed since the summer of 2020, with varying degrees of due process violations and procedural delays in their trials; and

Whereas the conflict in the Tigray Region occurs within the context of complicated regional and global dynamics featuring ongoing negotiations between Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, Ethiopia's rapprochement with Eritrea, threats posed by the violent extremist organization Al-Shabaab, a struggle for influence and power among regional and global actors, increasingly hostile border disputes between Ethiopia and Sudan, and the fragile democratic transition and peace process in Sudan: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) strongly disapproves of the escalation of political tensions between the Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) into armed conflict and condemns in the strongest terms all violence against civilians;